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# TRACTS FOR THE TIMES

No. I.

By JOHN BOYD

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## THE ISSUES

The fight in Canada is on. The issues are clear. The struggle, in its great essentials, is a renewal, in a more pronounced form than ever, of the age-long conflict between freedom and absolutism, between democracy and autocracy, between opportunity and privilege, between progress and reaction.

The situation in Canada is similar to the situation in other countries. The struggle in the Dominion, in fact, is but part of a world-wide struggle. 'The world is henceforth divided into two camps — progressives and reactionaries; the real, true revolution, which is to free humanity, has but begun. Come it will. It matters not, for the moment, that few can see clearly and that none can say: 'Behold the straight road out of the wilderness.' In Canada, if wisdom prevails, the new order will be realized without violence or force but one thing is certain and that is that the situation can only be successfully met by constructive methods.

Prevailing conditions carry their own lesson. From one end of the Dominion to the other there is unrest and discontent. Labor is pressing, not only for a readjustment of wages and time but the adoption of measures that will effect a radical change in the whole social and industrial system. The Winnipeg strike was but a symptom and its ending does not mean that the forces behind it have been annihilated. What the outcome of labor's demands will be nobody, of course, can say but it is certain that what labor is really aiming at is the democratization of industry, that it is looking forward to the time when a true industrial democracy will prevail in Canada as well as elsewhere. "Labor will never be satisfied until it has its share in the control of industry" is the declaration of one of the leaders of Canadian labor and it undoubtedly expresses a very widespread feeling.

Not only is the labor element up in arms but the farmers and the manufacturers are in conflict, the farmers, particularly of the West, demanding a reduction of the tariff with freer access to the United States' market whilst the manufacturers want more protection for their industries.

Another most important factor in the situation is the soldiers who have returned to the Dominion by the thousands. The attitude of the returned soldier is perfectly logical and clear. These men fought for nearly five years to put down Kaiserism and to make the world safe for democracy. Whatever motives may have actuated the politicians and others, the soldier was sincere; he believed that he was fighting, as he had been told, for democracy, freedom and justice. He, therefore, naturally wants to see democracy, freedom and justice prevail in Canada. He wants no Kaiserism of any description in the Dominion. It has been rather an eye-opener to the returned soldier to find that whilst he was fighting and bleeding for democracy abroad, there were those at home engaged in the shameless work of profiteering, in piling up huge fortunes at the expense of the people and that many of these men are now escaping their rightful share of the war burden. The effect of this brazen profiteering has been the advance in prices to unprecedented heights with the result that the cost of living has been vastly increased (by over 80 per cent. since the beginning of the war) and the great mass of the people have been made to suffer, for the benefit of the profiteer.

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It is in fact the great body of the consuming public, of those who belong neither to the capitalistic class, to the ranks of organized labor or to the farming community, who are the principal sufferers from the present abnormal conditions. They are being literally ground between the upper and the nether millstones and naturally they are the most resentful over the existing situation. Any attempted solution that does not reckon with this class must therefore necessarily prove abortive.

Under all the circumstances the prevailing unrest and discontent are not at all surprising. To stem the tide of popular resentment the spectre of Bolshevism has been evoked but all that is the merest camouflage. The dangerous element of the community, the worst enemy of Canada, is not the workingman who is seeking improved conditions, the returned soldier who is demanding that democracy and freedom shall prevail; the farmer who is urging a lower tariff and freer markets or the consumer who wishes to have his burdens lightened, but the profiteers, who have grown fabulously rich out of the people's necessities, those who would impose reactionary and repressive measures upon the people, those, in short who, heedless of all the signs of the time would turn back the clock to the days of the divine right of rulers and the exploitation of the great body of the people for the benefit of the privileged few.

It is not by half measures or repressive action, these people may rest assured, that the present evils will be cured. Hysteria and panic, alarmist cries of Bolshevism against all those who are working for reform will not help. There has been altogether too much of that. It is only by removing the causes that the existing evils will be cured. What is now most essential, therefore, in the interest of the whole Dominion is a constructive policy. It is, in fact only by the development of constructive forces that destructive forces can be counteracted. The adoption of destructive forces, that is the use of restrictive legislation, punishment, etc., can never, in itself be remedial. In a constructive policy for Canada there must be six main essentials:—

1. National Autonomy,
2. Racial Concord and National Unity,
3. The democratization of industry,
4. Adequate recognition of the claims of the farming community,
5. A lessening of the burden upon the consumer,
6. The recognition of the true functions of the state under a democracy.

The importance of the first two—national autonomy and racial concord and national unity—is so self-evident as not to require emphasis. We should particularly guard against the snares of the Imperialists in order that our national heritage shall be preserved intact. As far as the democratization of industry is concerned it may be taken for granted that the worker will never be satisfied and there will never be permanent peace until a change is effected in line with his aspirations. The majority report of the Industrial Commission contains some very pertinent proposals in this connection but it must be acted upon, not pigeon-holed. The farming community, as forming a basic element of our national prosperity, will also, it is certain, press its demands. It is a highly significant sign of the times that both the labor and farming elements are seeking to translate their convictions into political action and that the Agricultural Council, representing the farmers of Western Canada, has adopted a most progressive platform and is to have many candidates in the field at the next election. Such developments are bound to have a most important bearing upon the political situation. The future in Canada undoubtedly belongs to the party, no matter by what name it may be known, that shall have a democratic and progressive policy that will meet the needs of the great mass of the people.



Most vital is the necessity of lessening the burden upon the consumer as the present cost of living in Canada has become simply unendurable. "The real root of the evil is the high cost of living," says a high economic authority and while it is but a partial statement of the truth there is a great deal in it and there is the most pressing need for action in this respect. No mercy should be shown to the profiteer, either large or small.

The capitalist, the manufacturer, in fact all those identified with vested interests, will be well advised if they take heed of the signs of the times and if instead of placing obstacles in the way they endeavor to accommodate themselves to changed conditions. Masters of their own specialties they are often appallingly ignorant of conditions outside of their own particular sphere. With their minds concentrated on their own affairs, busy in the pursuit of money-making their predominant thought seems to be that "all's well with the world". But, unfortunately, all is not well with the world; far from it. Nor will such an attitude help in making the world well. The crying evils of the times call to all classes to awaken to the fact that great social and economic forces are at work the progress of which nothing can stay and that the solution of existing problems must be in accord with these forces.

Nor can peace and harmony ever be secured in Canada until there is a clear recognition of the real functions of government under a democracy. What was tolerated under war conditions can never be tolerated under peace conditions. The state should conform to its real functions. It has been wisely said that "in a democracy it is through the state that the people unite to give strength to their common aims while the state is merely the administrative organization through which the people can systematically manage their own affairs". Can it be said, with truth, that this is the case in Canada to-day? Can it be fairly claimed that the people of the Dominion are at present giving strength to their common aims through the state, when we have a Parliament that was really not elected by the democratic vote of the people and which therefore fails to be a faithful mirror of the popular will? Elected during the heated days of the war under a special War Times election Act the existing Parliament cannot certainly claim to be such. In addition many of the members are simply the representatives of large vested interests and most of the legislation is private and not public legislation, designed to serve the interests of the masses of the people. The farmer, the workingman, the great inarticulate public, must have a far larger representation in the national assembly before the people will be able to attain one of the cardinal principles of democracy "to give strength to their common aims through the state". In order that Parliament may serve this purpose and be a faithful mirror of the people's will there should, as soon as the respective parties have decided upon their platforms, be an immediate appeal to the people, with the opportunity given to all citizens of the country and not only to a selected portion to record their votes. By means of a democratic machinery, with a perfectly free franchise, it would be possible to secure the adoption of democratic and progressive measures by strictly constitutional means.

In Canada there must be rule by the people, not only theoretically but actually. Some public men in Canada, as well as elsewhere, it would seem, are laboring under the impression that they are the masters rather than the servants of the people. They must be made to realize their error.

Another necessity imperatively demanded by true democracy is the removal of all restrictions upon the liberty of the citizen. There must hereafter be a strict recognition of the constitutional rights and personal liberties of Canadians. Especially should the fullest freedom of expression be allowed. If it is not free and cannot be trusted then all democracy is based on sand.



Domiciliary raids, general search warrants and repression are not the instruments of a democracy. Law and order will, in fact, be the more respected and democracy will be the better served by allowing people to express their thoughts openly, however advanced they may be, without interference, unless of course there are any attempts at violence. The employment of violence and force, in any shape or in any quarter, should of course be strongly discountenanced; it is solely by the triumph of ideas that necessary changes and reforms should be secured. Error can only be overcome by truth. 'Let truth and error grapple; whoever knew truth to be beaten in a fair fight?' Our faith should be that if the people are permitted freely to hear both error and truth a majority will choose truth.

Such in brief compass would seem to be the most pressing needs of the times in Canada. They will be more exhaustively dealt with in subsequent tracts; sufficient has been said here as a mere outline.

To achieve the results indicated what would appear to be most imperative is a closer sense of the necessity of co-operation between all who profess and call themselves democrats based on a fuller appreciation of the breadth and the depth of their own meaning. To those who prize liberty and believe in democracy freedom and progress one of the most alarming features of the present situation in Canada must be the fact that while the reactionary elements are powerful and united the democratic and progressive forces, though considerable in numbers, are disunited in their efforts. There must be a closer and more effective co-operation to assure success. That co-operation must necessarily first of all be national in scope to assure the triumph of democratic and progressive principles within the national sphere. But it should also be international; especially should there be the most cordial co-operation between the democratic and progressive forces of the United States and Canada. Only an imaginary line separates the two countries and the cause of democracy, freedom and progress in both is one. The hands of all who believe in democracy, freedom and progress in Canada should, therefore, be extended in fraternal greeting to their comrades and fellow-workers in the United States as well as in all other countries. Democracy, freedom and progress in Canada, Democracy, freedom, and progress amongst our neighbors, democracy, freedom and progress throughout the world is a programme calling for the support of all who have the welfare of the people sincerely at heart.

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## THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL OF CANADA

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*Established for the safeguarding of the constitutional rights and personal liberties of Canadian citizens and the promotion, by constitutional means, of democratic and progressive principles.*

Those who desire to obtain information in regard to "THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL OF CANADA" and to become identified with its work may do so by addressing "THE CHAIRMAN, Provisional Executive, The People's Council of Canada, P. O. Drawer 1689, Montreal, Can."

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**Copies of this tract can be obtained in any quantity at cost on application.**

